



**Marc Elrich**  
County Executive



**Maxwell C. Uy**  
Sheriff

**Office of the Sheriff**  
**Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**  
Thursday, May 11, 2023  
5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

*Mission: To reduce the incidence of domestic violence and creating a safe community for families to live free of abuse.*

**Minutes**

**Present:** Tom Manion, Chair (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff); Jessica Volz, Vice Chair (Adventist Healthcare); Assistant Chief Nicholas Augustine (Montgomery County Police Department); The Honorable Karen Ferretti (District Court for Montgomery County); The Honorable Lynne Harris (Montgomery County Public Schools-Board of Education); Dorne Hill (Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services); The Honorable Sidney Katz (Montgomery County Council); Rochelle Perry (Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services- Parole and Probation); Ben Stevenson (Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation); Amy Palumbo (DVS Legal Services); Lavontte Chatmon (Community Member); Michelle Maxberry (Community Member); Maura Lynch (Community Member); Tondalayo Royster (Montgomery County Commission for Women); Kendall Stanley (Community Member); Ashley Noy, Staff (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff)

**Absent:** Aanika Arjumand (Student Member); Debbie Feinstein (Montgomery County Office of the State's Attorney); The Honorable Karla Smith (Circuit Court Montgomery County); Mindy Thiel (Community Member)

**Guests:** Captain Jeffery Bunge (Montgomery County Police Department); Lieutenant David Cohen (Montgomery County Police Department); Leslie Hawes (Court Watch Montgomery); Sharon Ledner (Office of Councilmember Katz); Smita Varia (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff); Sheriff Maxwell Uy (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff)

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

**II. Guidelines for the Virtual Meeting**

Tom Manion reviewed guidelines for virtual meeting participation. He asked everyone to mute microphones when not speaking. He asked the participants to use the chat function or the raise hand function if they would like to speak. He also requested that participants identify themselves each time they speak.

**III. Approval of March Minutes**

The March 9, 2023, DVCC meeting minutes were reviewed. Amy Palumbo proposed a motion to approve the minutes with the revision of Lavontte Chatmon's name, which was initially mis-spelled. The motion was seconded by The Honorable Karen Ferretti and Lavontte Chatmon and passed.

#### IV. Announcements

- Tom Manion announced that Smita Varia has moved into the position of Program Manager at the Family Justice Center and is transitioning out of the DVCC Manager position. Ashley Noy now is the new Manager of the Domestic Violence Prevention Programs, formerly known as the DVCC Manager.
- Smita Varia announced that she will still be participating in the Victim Services Committee and the Education and Outreach Committee.
- Tom Manion announced that since Ashley Noy was previously a Client Assistance Specialist at The Family Justice Center, there is now a vacant position. The Client Assistance Specialist has a frontline, direct services role and is the primary point of contact for victims. The vacancy has been posted on the Montgomery County Jobs website and closes May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- Tondalayo Royster announced that the Commission for Women has been holding a series of programs for the community. This includes self-defense classes, a financial health and wellness series as well as a divorce and separation seminar series. The Commission for Women is currently concluding their Spring session and will have a few more workshops for the health and wellness series which include the Social Security and Medicare session on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, as well as the Divorce and Money session scheduled for May 23, 2023.
- Captain Bunge announced that May 21, 2023 is the Community Day for law enforcement agencies and Montgomery County partners. The event will be held at the Montgomery County Fair Grounds from 11:00am – 6:00pm. The Special Victims Division will be present along with the Family Justice Center, Sheriff's Office, and State's Attorney Office to answer any questions for the public and provide information.

#### V. Guest Speaker: Leslie Hawes, Executive Director of Court Watch Montgomery

Leslie Hawes, the Executive Director of Court Watch Montgomery, joined the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, to discuss the findings of the 2022 Court Watch Montgomery Annual Report. Court Watch Montgomery is a surveillance program based in Montgomery County which focuses on Protective Order hearings and intimate partner violence. A copy of the report can be found at the following link:

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAFcY-9GlaQ/6aRxxP\\_ZTmCZ5JqXO2vSEA/view?utm\\_content=DAFcY-9GlaQ&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=publishsharelink&ct=t\(2022-year-end-report\)#1](https://www.canva.com/design/DAFcY-9GlaQ/6aRxxP_ZTmCZ5JqXO2vSEA/view?utm_content=DAFcY-9GlaQ&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&ct=t(2022-year-end-report)#1)

*Finding One: "Outcomes in 2022 varied somewhat by judge, but one judge had a notably higher denial rate than other judges in Montgomery County."*

*Finding Two: "Petitioners obtained final orders at much higher rates when supported in court by a victim advocate or attorney, yet 74% of petitioners appeared alone at their final hearing"*

*Finding Three: "When petitioners in 2022 requested to drop their case, judges asked if they were coerced in more than half of final hearings and encouraged them to return to court if they felt unsafe in nearly two-thirds. Judges referred petitioners to victim advocates in 16% of hearings before dismissing their case."*

- Amy Palumbo stated there are several circumstances as to why victims do not have attorneys present with them during the Final Protective Order hearing. In addition, there are not as many Court Advocates available as there was pre-pandemic.
- Leslie Hawes stated that it may be helpful for more Court Advocates to be present at court, particularly Advocates that can walk victims through the process or stand up with the victim at court.
- Tom Manion states that he would like for the Victim Services Committee to look into the limited number of legal representations.
- Tom Manion announced that he will be speaking with Debbie Feinstein to see if the Education and Outreach Committee is able to investigate best practices for judges regarding Intimate Partner Violence victims.

## **VI. Committee Reports**

### **A. Legislative and Policy Planning Committee – Maura Lynch, Chair**

- Maura Lynch reported that the Committee is still waiting for approval from the Office of Intergovernmental Relations for the DVCC's advocacy letter but unfortunately the session has ended. Maura hopes to try again next year and expedite the process of getting the approval in a timely fashion.

### **B. Victim Services Committee update – Tom Manion, Chair**

- Tom Manion reported there are no updates at this time for the Victim Services Committee. Due to a last-minute conflict they had to cancel the April meeting. The Victim Services Committee remains committed to their ongoing initiatives regarding housing, addiction services and legal services for victims.

### **C. Education and Outreach Committee – Debbie Feinstein, Chair**

- Smita Varia reported that the Education and Outreach Committee did not meet today before the DVCC meeting due to Debbie Feinstein's absence.
- Smita Varia reported that Respect Fest, which was held in April was extremely successful. There were virtual events the week prior to the in-person festival and had online workshops for Middle and High School students as well as their parents. In addition, there was a survivor speaker at the opening webinar, social media promotions and eight activities for Middle and High School students to do online. On Sunday April 16<sup>th</sup> the Respect Fest in-person event was held at the Wheaton Recreation Center which was indoor and outdoor. There were about 600 individuals who joined in-person and 1,100-1,200 in total for both in-person and virtual events.

### **D. Offender Program and Policy Committee – Ben Stevenson, Chair**

- Ben Stevenson reported the Offender Program and Policy Committee met this past week. The Department of Correction and Rehabilitation along with their programs are beginning to come out of their COVID-19 restrictions.
- Ben reported that the Pre-Release Center re-opened on April 16, 2023, and is currently holding 32 residents. The Pre-Release Center is bringing in about 10 new residents per week.
- Ben reported that based on conversations with the Offender Program and Policy Committee, there will be further discussion about the caseload received by Pre-Trial Services and the Domestic Violence cases to ensure referrals for the Abuser Intervention Program (AIP) are being executed.

- Ben reported that space in the jails is also something that is being worked on. During COVID-19 there was not a high sentencing population as there is now of about 150-175 inmates. Ben is hoping that with the Pre-Release Center re-opening it will allow more space, a new normal, as well as provide access to existing programs and expansion for new programs.
- Rochelle Perry reported that Parole and Probation has resumed their monthly orientations which will be held the first Friday of each month.

## **VII. Adjournment**

Tom Manion, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 6:04pm

**The next DVCC meeting will on July 13, 2023, 5pm-7pm**



**Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**